

18 October 1982

SUBJECT: Peacekeeping Options in Northern Lebanon

1. The Setting: The only two PLO-controlled Palestinian refugee camps remaining in Lebanon are in northern Lebanon situated in Tripoli (Lebanon's second largest city and a traditional Muslim/leftist stronghold) and outside Baalbek in the northern Biqa' Valley. Approximately 5-7,000 hardcore PLO fighters and an equal number of militiamen are in these areas and the central Biqa. Most are Fatah members but a sizable amount are PLFP and DFLP. Syrian forces number around 7,000 and the area is a traditional Syrian zone of influence (the Akkar plain north of Tripoli is populated by many Alawites).

2. Syrian Withdrawal and the PLO: Should Syria withdraw its forces from Lebanon a majority of the hardcore PLO forces probably would initially leave as well. [REDACTED] Unlike Beirut, however, there is no enforcing authority. Radical elements will stay, as will Fatah stay-behind cadre. The militia will, of course, remain, and others will reinfiltate after withdrawing. Much of the border zone is mountainous -- no Lebanese government has ever been able to fully secure the area from smuggling. Many local militia groups are pro-PLO or pro-Syrian and would assist reinfiltration.

A key factor will be the status of Syrian-PLO/Fatah relations. Should Assad and Arafat break publicly over Arafat's talks with Jordan, for example, Fatah may seek to keep its forces in the north where Syrian control would be less strict than in Syria itself. Damascus might seek to

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reinfiltrate its own Palestinian allies (Saiqa/PLA) into the area to rein in Fatah. Moreover, Assad might try to stir up trouble in Lebanon using his Palestinian proxies to derail PLO-Jordanian involvement in the peace process, and keep the Lebanese crisis alive. If relations are more normal (tense but workable) Fatah would be more inclined to leave Lebanon for Syria.

3. Options

- A. MNF Deployment: Sending MNF units into these areas would risk confrontation with stay-behind PLO forces. Attempting to completely secure the border would be an impossible task without very large forces.

 - B. UN Deployment: UNIFIL is needed in southern Lebanon and would be no more (probably less) effective than an MNF unit. Un observers could play a useful political role but would be only a symbolic presence.

 - C. No Deployment: This option would leave the north as a grey area without a formal Syrian/PLO presence but under their influence. In some ways it would be similar to the pre-invasion Haddad-controlled buffer zone in southern Lebanon. The Beirut government probably could accept this scenario for the mid-term as long as the principle of an eventual Lebanese army takeover was accepted by all parties.
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4. An MNF could probably be deployed in a relatively secure manner in the Biqa' Valley as far north as Baalbek. As such, they could release LAF personnel for duty elsewhere and would hamper infiltration. The northern

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Biqā', the Akkar, and Tripoli will probably remain infested with armed Palestinians until the LAF itself is strong enough to eject them. As indicated in 3C above, this may be tolerable to the parties most concerned in the intermediate range future.